

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 00536 251714Z

64

ACTION EUR-25

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PBOR, EI, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: IRISH REACTION TO MASON REMARKS RE WITHDRAWAL OF
BRITISH TROOPS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

1. APRIL 24 REMARKS BY BRITISH DEFENSE SECRETARY
ROY MASON RE -MOUNTING PRESSURE" FOR BRITISH TROOP
WITHDRAWAL FROM NORTHERN IRELAND PROVOKED IMMEDIATE
REACTION IN DUBLIN. IRISH TIMES REPORTS GOI
MINISTERS "WERE SHOCKED AND MORE THAN A LITTLE
DISPLEASED," AND SPEECH WOULD BE DISCUSSED AT CABINET
MEETING APRIL 25. TIMES REPORTED SPECULATION THAT BRITISH WERE
EMBARKING ON POLICY OF "FRIGHTENING EVERYBODY."

2. EMBOFF DISCUSSED MASON SPEECH WITH SEAN DONLON,
COUNSELLOR IN GOI FONOFF ANGLO-IRISH POLITICAL SECTION.
DONLON CONFIRMED THAT GOI MINISTERS WERE INDEED
SHOCKED, BUT SAID HE BELIEVED REMARKS HAD NO PARTICULAR
SIGNIFICANCE AS THEY WERE MADE WITHOUT SCRIPT AND WITH-
OUT AUTHORITY IN GENERAL REVIEW OF DEFENSE SECURITY
BEFORE A GROUP OF BRITISH MINERS. DONLON SAID MASON
HAS NO REAL INPUT INTO BRITISH NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY
UNDER CURRENT LABOUR GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION AND IS
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APPARENTLY OUT OF TOUCH; REMARKS WERE APPARENTLY "STRAIGHT

FORWARD BOOB -- NOT KITEFLYING." DONLON SAID HE FIRST HEARD ABOUT MASON'S REMARKS IN A NEWS REPORT WITHDRAWING THEM; THERE HAD BEEN THREE "CLARIFICATIONS" TWO BY MASON HIMSELF AND ONE OFFICIALLLY BY BRITISH MINISTRY.

3. NEVERTHELESS, DONLON BELIEVED MASON WAS ARTICULATING WIDESPREAD FEELING AMONG HMG'S LABOR SUPPORTERS. IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT HE HAD SPOKEN PUBLICLY, AS SPECULATION ABOUT BRITISH TROOP WITHDRAWAL ONLY ENCOURAGED PROVOS AND LED EXTREMIST PROTESTANTS TO PREPARE ALL THE MORE ACTIVELY FOR THIS CONTINGENCY. DONLON WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED RE UNFORTUNATE TIMING OF REMARKS, GIVEN TENSION ALREADY PRESENT IN NI, AND SAID HE HOPED AGITATION OVER THEM WOULD DIE OUT SOON.

4. DUBLIN EDITORIAL REACTION APRIL 25 WAS MIXED. IRISH TIMES BELIEVED MASON REMARKS WERE MORE THAN KITE-FLYING, AS THIS WAS FIRST TIME BRITISH TROOP WITHDRAWAL HAD BEEN MENTVEDED BY A MINISTER. TIMES SAID PEOPLE WOULD BELIEVE HMG "SOLEMN ASSURANCES" ON NI LESS AND LESS. HOWEVER, IF SUFFICIENT WARNING GIVEN BEFOREHAND AND NI PEOPLE HAD ENOUGH SENSE TO ORGANIZE A FULLY INTEGRATED SECURITY AND DEFENSE SYSTEM OF THEIR OWN, EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL NEED NOT NECESSARILY LEAD TO FEARED "BLOOD-BATH". IRISH INDEPENDENT NOTED GREAT PRESSURE IN BRITAIN FOR WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS, CRITICIZED REMARKS AS ENCOURAGING TO PROVOS, BUT STRESSED MASON POINT THAT NI PEOPLE SHOULD DO MORE THEMSELVES TO MEET CHALLENGE OF SECURITY. IRISH PRESS, WHICH HAS BEEN SOUNDING MORE AND MORE REPUBLICAN OF LATE, BELIEVED SPEECH MARKED "DISTINCT CHANGE IN BRITISH INTENTION " " " SIGNALING A DESIRE FOR DEPARTURE." PRESS NOTED IT HAD LONG ARGUED THAT BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE WAS AMPLIFYING SCOPE AND SCALE OF VIOLENCE IN NI, SAID FIRST STEP COULD BE RESTRICTION OF BRITISH TROOPS TO BARRACKS AND THAT "SENSIBLE, MODERATE, AND POSITIVE SOLUTION" WOULD BE TO INVEST RESPONSIBILITY FOR SECURITY IN THIRD FORCE, LIKE UN. MOORE

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